

THE FIREMAN'S JOURNAL

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CAMILLE.

We clip the following plot of the great play of Camille from the New York *News*. Probably no play has created a greater sensation in this country than this. Wherever it is played crowds throng the theatres. It is dramatized from Dumas' work of that name and was translated and adapted to the American stage by Miss Davenport, who represented the character of Camille when the play was first presented to the public at the Broadway Theatre, New York. Miss Heron, Mrs. Julia Dean Hayne, Miss Eliza Logan, Miss Susan Denin, and others of less celebrity, have also appeared in the same character.

The Dame aux Camélias formed the first dramatic debut of Alexandre Dumas, Jr.

The heroine of the drama had a real existence. All the *habitudes* of the opera of the *Maison d'Or* and the *Café Anglais* knew her well under the title of Maria Duplessis. She possessed one of those countenances that can never be forgotten, and nature had endowed her with every external attraction which could give her a hold on the *Chaussée d'Antin* or *Faubourg St. Germain* but might have been ready to die with envy at beholden her exquisite toilette and her refined and elegant manners.

Poor Maria was so delicately framed that any exertion, no matter how light, in the way of physical toil, was to her impossible. Alexandre, her family, want and wretchedness ruined her, and if it had been difficult to pardon her, it is still more difficult to condemn. The title of Dame aux Camélias originated in the fact, that, unable to endure the perfume of any other flower, she kept superb bouquets of Camellias in her apartments throughout every season of the year.

With this character for his heroine, Alexandre Dumas, the young, succeeded in producing a master piece of sentiment, and Miss Davenport has commanded it in her heart and reproduced it with all the power of her rare intelligence, carefully avoiding the two dangers it involves, viz: that of making the character of Dame aux Camélias too poetical, to the detriment of pure virtue, and that of withdrawing the veil too far from the deformities of vice.

Maria Duplessis was an essentially Parisian type, and hence Miss Davenport has been obliged to cast aside all passages which, however well understood at Paris, would not have been so in New York, Philadelphia or Boston.

Alexandre Dumas, Jr., who gave Maria Duplessis the name of Marguerite, Miss Davenport christens her Camille. We shall retain the latter name, as it is Miss Davenport who furnishes us with particular details of romance.

At the epoch when the drama commences, Camille is surrounded by a circle of friends who represent various but all equally true characters. Madame Duverney, who has reached the maturity of her age, after having traversed a rather stormy life, at the expense of those to whom she endeavored to render a thousand little services of a somewhat equivocal nature. Olympia is the perfect type of a woman who, without becoming shamelessly vulgar, has yet lost all remains of modesty and dignity.

Nichette is a quiet *ouïeuse*, who manages to remain virtuous in the midst of an immoral circle; the latter secondary part faintly traced as it is, serves to form a kind of contrast with the parts of Camille and Olympia. Armand Duval is not yet known; Saint Germain, representing the bachelor who is only more ridiculous because he thinks himself quite irresistible; Varville is a sort of Marplot, whose no one can endure, notwithstanding his great wealth; Gaston, on the other hand, is a young fellow of excellent heart, who lives plunged in dissipation through mere rashness and inexperience.

It may at once be seen that in a play much could be made of all these personages.

Camille is attacked by a terrible malady which follows the singular repetition of excess and to which certain delicate temperaments are more particularly predisposed. For three long months she had been condemned by her physician to remain constantly confined in her delicious boudoir, observing at the same time, the most complete repose. In this situation, a tall young admirer having devoted herself to a certain young man, who always comes to approach Camille with having communication with her. This design Camille is ignorant, and victoriously defends herself from the accusation brought against her, exhibiting the deed by which she is about to sell all she owns at Paris. M. Duval, who at first gave full utterance to his indignation and reproach, is at length moved to compassion, and says with surprise almost with emotion:

"Can I have been deceived?"

"Yes sir," Camille instantly replies, "you have deceived yourself; or rather, you have been misled. I have been well; I have a sad past to look back upon; but since I have learned to love Armand, I would give the last drop of my blood to blot it out. Oh! when you have told you, I still have a heart. It is Armand who has effected this change."

Armand, who is a young man, has, without becoming shamelessly vulgar, has yet lost all remains of modesty and dignity.

It will now reproduce the dialogue almost entire, as the younger Dumas has written it. An extract from the principal scenes is of more value than a dry analysis.

"Madame Duverney" says Camille, "come to see me; now that you have got home."

"I cannot; I have two young gentlemen with

me who have invited me to supper."

"Oh! Well, bring them here to supper. What are their names?"

"There is only one of them known to you—Gaston Rieux. The other is his friend, Armand Duval."

A few moments later Madame Duverney introduces Gaston.

"Permit me," says she, "to present to you M. Armand Duval, a gentleman who, of all Paris, is the most in love with you."

"Your friend is charming," says Camille to Gaston, while Armand stands aloof.

They sit at table. The supper is as gay as only such suppers can be. They sing; they dance; but Camille falters after tripping a few steps. She stops, faltered, and all the guests, excepting Armand, are in an adjoining room.

"You are destroying yourself," says Armand to Camille.

"I wish I were your friend, your relative; that I might prevent you from thus injuring your health."

"But if I took care of myself I should die. All that sustains me is the feverish life I lead. It is all very well for the women of the fashionable world to turn themselves, but as for us, the moment we can no longer serve the vanity of others we are abandoned."

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From that night forth, Camille is no longer seen at any amusement, and her malady makes terrible trouble for her. She has received from M. Duval a letter which she reads again and again. It is worded: "You have kept me from your own strength." He says in conclusion: "I have written the whole truth to Armand; he will return to solicit your forgiveness for himself and me; I have been forced to do you injury, and I desire to make reparation; your courage and self-denial deserve a better future, and you shall have it; I promise it to you."

"Should Armand return?" thought the poor dying girl.

"I would once more love me, I were then saved."

Armand returns, but alas, too late!

"Camille was far away; I know not whether to fly from my love and my remorse; but my father has written me all. I set forth like a madman pressing on through the day without tarrying, without repose—impelled by a burning desire to see her again."

"She is still in love with me," says Armand.

"I am nothing to you, Camille, yet with your permission I should nurse you, I would not leave you, I would cure you. And then I feel assured that you would prefer to the existence you now lead, a tranquil life that would make you happier, and preserve your beauty."

"Whence arise such devotion?"

"To prove the irre sistible sympathy I feel for you."

"Would you permit me to offer you one word of advice?"

"Pronounce it!"

"Take post and fly hence, if what you have told me be true. You have a good heart, Armand, and you desire to be loved; you are too good and too sensitive to live in this world of ours."

"I am afraid of you, Camille, and I should have a good heart if I had it."

"I am nothing to you, Camille, yet with your permission I should nurse you, I would not leave you, I would cure you. And then I feel assured that you would prefer to the existence you now lead, a tranquil life that would make you happier, and preserve your beauty."

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